1: Hoebel E-5 (1933) 1940 NO6 Comanche NO6

621 camp together, even within the large bands, the linkage of the person to the band was on the basis of free association. Marriage was commonly intra-band when a person was a member of a larger group, but there was no fixed 591 rule of residence. Since marriage seems to have been to a great extent with-882 in the band, a couple lived customarily in the same group as both their parents. Boys of adolescent age lived in small tipis of their own, to facilitate sister-avoidance and to prepare them for vision experience. To this lodge, which was set near that of his parents, a boy brought his wife, until a growing family necessitated her building a larger dwelling. In this and in certain other respects, Comanche residence was semi-patrilocal. Children, as a [611] result, usually belonged to the band of the father.

591 But, except for habituation, there was nothing to prevent change of residence to another band at any time, mere whim being sufficient cause. 166 With a good deal of inter-visiting going on, temporary changes were fre-157 quent. An "immigrant" simply moved in. No permission was necessary. Under such circumstances rigorous superimposed control of the individual in matters of ordinary concern was impossible. Conditions were favorable for the relative individualism upon which the Comanche relied in governing his life. Mobility even provided a way of avoiding the legal consequences of a wrong. In several instances we found that a culprit joined a new band where the aggrieved might never have occasion to meet him.

621 What constituted a Comanche local group is not a problem to be settled by monistic definition. Only the larger bands received permanent recognition and a name. Thus it is not possible to state precisely how many Comanche bands there were. Mooney[11] in 1912 listed thirteen Comanche bands. Neighbors[12] in 1860 listed but eight. Lowie[13] in 1912 recorded four.

Thirteen bands were listed by the Comanche informants used in this investigation in 1933. Multiple names were used in a number of instances for a single band. These have been equated in the list given below.[14] Band names given by Mooney and Neighbors, for which no equivalents were recorded by the Sante Fe Laboratory Field Study Group, are given in the

[11] James Mooney, *Comanche*, (Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico, ed. F. H. Hodge, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 30, vol. 1, 1907), pp. 328–329.

[12] R. S. Neighbors, *The Na-uni, or Comanches of Texas; Their Traits and Beliefs, and Their Divisions and Intertribal Relations* (History of the Indian Tribes of the United States, vol. 2, 1861), pp. 130–131.

[13] R. H. Lowie, *Dances and Societies of the Plains Shoshone* (Anthropological Papers, American Museum of Natural History, vol. 11, 1916), p. 813.

[14] Key to symbols used in the list of Comanche bands: * for names recorded by the Laboratory, † for names recorded by Mooney, ‡ for names recorded by Neighbors. Lowie gives the first four names in the list.

1: Hoebel E-5 (1933) 1940 NO6 Comanche NO6

"One night his mother came back to the band. She went right into her son's tipi and shook his arm. She told him to get up and get some bison before they moved camp, because the people were going to a place where buffalo were scarce. 689 762

"The young man woke up and looked at her. He said, 'Did you call me "son"?' 'No,' he replied to her avowal, 'I have no mother. You tell me you're my mother. You don't know what you are talking about. Go away!'

"His mother uttered a groan and went back to her own tipi. Then she went out. She went down by the creek to a tree and threw a raw-hide rope over a branch. She stood on a log and put the rope about her neck. After that she kicked the log out into the stream and hung herself.

"The body was discovered by some hunters. All the people ran down there to cut her down and they buried her not far from the creek. The brother of the dead woman was angry. He said he would kill his nephew's wife. He said she must have had something to do with it; otherwise it would not have happened. But the young man and his wife ran away. They stayed with some other people until the trouble was forgotten."

Here again the son was legally right, for his mother had given up proper claim to him. For that in itself the son was not blamed. And yet to cause her such anguish that she committed suicide was going too far. In the uncle's thinking the son would not have done that of his own volition; his hussy of a wife must have urged him to it! The forgetting of the trouble, by lapse of time, shows the role of momentary passion, such as grief, or outraged dignity, in a hot-tempered people. [157] [152]

Nor should we fail to include the seeking of death in flaming glory on the battlefield, sought with reckless abandon by men whose honor was stained or whose failing constitutions held out the prospect of death on the sick-bed. These, too, were suicide: but suicide turned to public benefit.

Case 39. Suicide
Informant: Talker (Recorded by Jeannette Mirsky)

"Among the Yap-Eaters were two brothers: they were Thunder and Rocky Creek. They grew up together and never quarrelled. When they were yet young men their last remaining relatives died, leaving them alone. They were single men.

"Then came the time when Rocky Creek eloped with Eat Something; he took her on the war-path, for she was married to an old man. His brother was with him in this venture. But then they returned, Rocky Creek let her go; because she was a mean woman he did not want her.

"These brothers had a sister, Breaks Wind While Sitting, who was married. When they returned from the war-path they went to visit her.[1] Their brother-in-law,

[1] The rules of avoidance lapse when brother and sister have been married.

Three Years Among the Comanches

157 624 551 Se-ma-naw, the youngest wife of the civil chief, possessed a cheerful and lively disposition, always frolicsome as the young antelope of the prairie. She was the daughter of the war chief of the tribe, *Sa-was-saw*, the Bear, and niece of An-a-wak-ke-o, who was her father's sister. The name of the prophet was *Han-na-nos-ka-a*, signifying the wisest of the wise.

622 157 The Rolling Thunder possessed a remarkably inquisitive mind, and was, moreover, extremely sociable. In the course of his life, he had several times crossed the borders of the Indian territory into Mexico, and had some faint notions of civilization—just enough to excite his curiosity. Hour after hour he would converse with me in his tent about the manners and customs of the whites. On these occasions, I endeavored to illustrate, in the best possible manner, their superiority and power. With a piece of charcoal, I would sketch on a sheet of birch bark the figure of a ship, "with wings whiter than a swan's and wider than many eagles"—its masts taller than the tallest cedar on the mountains—representing it as capable of carrying more than a thousand pack mules could bear; that in this great canoe, the white man would sail away over the salt water, beyond the sight of land, to a vast continent, distant more than a hundred days' journey to the east. He had never seen the [173] ocean; nevertheless, he comprehended its vastness through the traditions of his fathers, who once dwelt upon its shore; but no logic could convince him that the mighty land beyond it was a part of this globe; his reasoning leading him irresistably to the conclusion that it must necessarily belong 823 to another planet. When I told him the earth was round like a ball, and on the opposite side were extensive countries and millions of people—that if we could bore a hole through it directly beneath our feet, we would emerge into

3:Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
NO6 Comanche NO6

speed and distance skills. With the older men they threw arrows at marks and at the wheel. The women also had a sport of their own: kick-the-ball. Younger men wrestled and in older times played at kicking each other. And adults of both sexes spent hours in games of chance. Then there were social dances of a purely recreational nature, storytelling, gossiping, and singing. A Comanche rarely had good reason to be bored, and with his usually extroverted personality his lust for life was strong.

Shinny and double ball were exclusively women's games among the Comanches. Lacrosse, definitely a man's game and important in the lives of the eastern Indians, was never taken up by the Comanche men. The two ball games played by the women were essentially similar in principle, but different in equipment required and in its use.

Ten women or girls to a side made up the usual team. The players, garbed in showy dress, were wont to gather on the ball field about mid-afternoon. If they intended to play shinny, two stakes were driven into the ground at both ends of a field a hundred or more yards long. Each player had a curved stick. The ball, made of hair-stuffed deerskin, was flattened and three or four inches in diameter. The rules of the game were essentially similar to those of our own shinny.

Double ball was a much faster variation of shinny. One stake at each end of the field formed the goal. A rawhide thong eighteen inches long was substituted for a ball. A hooked stick three feet long was used by each player to catch and throw the thong. The game started with a referee tossing the thong up between two centers as in basketball. The one who caught it had to throw it with her stick to a teammate, who ran toward her goal with it. If blocked by an opponent, she tossed it over her opponent and caught it coming down on the other side, continuing on her way, or else she passed it over to a teammate. The object was to maneuver into position so that the thong could be thrown at the stake. When it wrapped itself around the pole, a goal had been scored. This game, called *natsi˝ɒ:et*, was the favorite of the Water Horse band, who were "tall, thin, and fleet of foot." When two bands gathered for games, they would bring up great bundles of goods for betting. They beat all other bands at *natsi˝ɒ:et* until the others refused to play them.[24]

[24] Informant: That's It.

4: Goldstein D-5 (ca. 1930)1934
NO6 Comanche NO6

Miscellaneous. The body build of the Comanches is inclined to corpulency, perhaps even more today than in Catlin's time. The hands appeared small but well formed. Several instances were noted where the second toe of the foot was distinctly longer than the first or big toe.

The health of the Comanches seemed not particularly good. Trachoma is endemic, with actual blindness or badly impaired vision frequent. Rheumatism, venereal diseases, and tuberculosis were other common complaints.

Relative to mentality, Richardson ('27, p. 72) says, "the Comanches were not a dull people. In native ability their chiefs were a match for the keenest minds of the white men." Mooney appraises them as 'practical and businesslike.' Although the present writer's sojourn with the tribe was very brief, he can emphatically confirm the judgments of the aforementioned observers. Joking or bantering proclivities seemed also a widespread characteristic.

MEASUREMENTS[a]

Stature. The average stature of the Comanches, according to the writer's data, is 168.3 cm. for males and 156.1 cm. for females. These averages are quite close to those reported by Boas (1895 a, males 167.8 cm., females 156.2 cm.), being practically identical in the females. A significant likeness, too, appears in the gross distribution of the two series, namely, approximately one-fourth, respectively, being short (below 166 cm.), and tall (above 173 cm.).

	Males	
	Under 166 cm., per cent	Over 173 cm., per cent
Comanche		
Goldstein	29.4	23.5
Boas	24.4	27.1
Apache and Navaho (Boas, 1895 a)	23.7	25.3

[a] It may be mentioned that the percental distributions of the characters measured, not included here, were, despite the small numbers, as a rule of remarkably even spread, i.e., conforming to the normal distribution curve. The averages, minima and maxima of the various characters are appended at the end.

7: Richardson D-4 (no date) 1929
NO6 Comanche NO6

They
533had some music, but their repertoire was limited even for savages. Noah Smithwick, who spent several months with the Comanches about 1837, states that it was customary for the first fellow who awoke in the morning to announce that fact in song; but he thought this was rather a "spontaneous outpouring akin to that of the feathered songsters than a religious rite."[30]

157 Notwithstanding their lack of culture the Comanches were not a dull people. In native ability their chiefs were a match for the keenest minds of the white men. Once in a council (the proceedings of which were carefully recorded by a secretary) President Sam Houston was trying to get the Comanches to agree to a line of division between the country of the Indians and that of their white neighbors. In the treaty the line was not being described as the Indians had been told it would be run. Buffalo Hump, a young Comanche chief, detected the discrepancy at once and a sharp argument between him and Houston followed. The dialogue is too long to be repeated, but one who reads it will be convinced that the chief knew exactly what he wanted and why he wanted it. He knew the topography of the country to perfection and also the settlements and roads. He clung persistently to his position and would not be moved from it.[31]

181 Notwithstanding their many savage vices the Comanches rated
577higher morally than other nomadic tribes. They were hospitable and would share their last morsel with their guests. In war they gave no quarter and asked none, but it was not their custom to apply slow torture to unfortunate enemies. Of course individuals differed widely. Among the Southern Comanches, chief Buffalo Hump was erratic and sometimes treacherous, but Mo-pe-cho-co-pe (Old Owl) was even tempered and altogether dependable. Robert S. Neighbors, long a Texas and United States Indian agent, knew the Old Owl for a number of years and in his reports quotes him again and again. There is nothing whatever to indicate that Neighbors ever lost confidence in the old savage or ever doubted his word.[32] There were, no doubt, many Comanches as honest as the Old Owl, but the

30. *The Evolution of a State*, 181.

31. "Minutes of a Grand Council held near the Falls of the Brazos, between the Republic of Texas and the Indians, commencing on Monday, October 7th, 1844, Ms. Texas Indian Papers.

32. For instance, see Neighbors' report to Medill, 30 Cong., 1st Session, Senate Executive Document No. 171, 16-25.

9: Gladwin E-5 (1940) 1948 NO6 Comanche NO6

sideration, with no other blood ties to bridge the gap. The existence of the "unrelated" spouses involved in these second marriages as parts of the group of relations under consideration is recognized, and a number of relatives of theirs may even be given under questioning, but some different line of relationship, usually stemming from a purported "blood" tie, is selected by which to identify them. The completeness of this other identification is well illustrated by the fact that frequently, when an informant was asked what the correct term for one of these individuals would be through the line which had been under consideration, the answer could be shown by later checking to be incorrect.

Exceptions to this rule are, of course, relatively frequent, the most common cause being variations in residence. Thus the man from whom I collected a complete genealogy[8] spent the whole of the course of his fairly long second marriage with his wife's family, and thus became accustomed to using the proper terms for a great many of them, in spite of the fact that several were connected by lines involving two marriages beside his own. Another remarkably frequent situation was one in which another line of descent coincides with the one in question, and, reinforcing this last, causes the group to be considerably extended in size. There was no awareness of whether a given relationship should be traced back through one or the other line.

Personality factors are unquestionably also operative in governing the size of the kin-group; not only will relationship be more readily admitted or sought after with people one likes or who are high in prestige, and vice versa, but we also had a feeling that some people were much more anxious than others to surround themselves with as many relatives as possible and to be able to implement these relationships by knowing how to trace them, thus supporting the implication of admittance to the in-group of the addressee, and the mutual support and esteem there expected. This opinion was corroborated by some of the younger men, but we were not able to get any more direct evidence than this. Naturally, our knowledge of the personalities of the informants was comparatively sketchy as a result of our short contact with them. Dr. Clyde Kluckhohn has indicated that his extensive work with the Navaho has shown clearly that such a desire exists among certain individuals there, leading to an effort to expand the group of known kin as far as possible.

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[8] Two complete genealogies were collected, one from a man (T), and the other from a woman (TY). T had been blind for the last twenty-eight years of his life, so that he did not always know some of the younger people. Other informants contributed more fragmentary genealogical information, limited both by time and their lack of interest in the subject, while all informants produced isolated examples and generalizations in response to questions. The two complete genealogies comprised 187 and 133 individuals respectively.

It should be noted that the phrase "line of relationship" refers to no functional kingroup, but only to those individuals through whom relationship is traced.

20: Wallace H-4,5 (1945) 1953 NO6 Comanche NO6

657 make the cultural transition they have been called upon to
178 accomplish. As a result of its work, many tribal superstitutions
177 are being discarded for modern scientific concepts.
[757] Although hardly a Comanche would accept a white physi-
[756] cian at the beginning of the reservation period, the Indian practitioner today is almost a forgotten man.

186 The Comanches are still confronted with many sociolog-
178 ical and psychological problems of adjustment. They have
177 not entirely disintegrated, nor have they been completely
182 assimilated. They are still Indian and want to follow the Indian pattern; their environment, experience, and teaching encourages them to discard it. They are intensely proud of being Comanche, and cherish their cultural heritage. They feel that they were unjustly robbed of their homeland, but know that they must make the best of their situation. The conflict between the old and the new often prevents the acceptance of any regular pattern of conduct and leads to confusion or unusual situations.

[291] The matter of custom is vital to the Comanches. It is
[302] difficult to discard tradition. Some old women still wear their blankets, and a few old men continue to paint their faces and to wear their hair in plaits. The tradition of gen-
431 erosity does not fit well in American society for it is an im-
[454] pediment to economic security. Their idea of a pleasant life does not include saving, because saving had no place in their primitive society. The give-away dance has not entirely disappeared, and those who give are the losers and afterwards may seek the aid of the government.

157 There still exists a strong incentive toward the glorifica-
181 tion of the individual. This character trait was a regular
[178] feature of the old social system, where the aim of the warrior was to gain glory and where there was constant acknowledgment of his achievements. It led to an immense
[152] sensitiveness to praise and censure. The Comanches, as a result, require more praise than the white man to function,
157 and they suffer more than the white man from censure. The
181 attitude was readily apparent in 1945. More than two hun-
701

20: Wallace H-4,5 (1945) 1953 NO6 Comanche NO6

dred Comanches were in military service. The people were proud of their young warriors and showered them with honors remarkably like the treatment accorded the warriors when they were the lords of the Southern Plains.

The love of pageantry creates a problem. The business-like course of white life deprives the Comanches of more of it than they like. This characteristic of the people is apparent at the annual Indian Exposition at Anadarko, a commercial show sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. The performance has little historical accuracy, but this does not offend the Indians. They are more concerned with the spirit of display than about historical authenticity. They will bankrupt themselves to get there, and then wear an unheard of costume with self-satisfaction. Any special occasion, as Christmas and July 4, affords opportunity for pageantry. Departing and returning warriors of World War II were honored with feasts, parades, and variations of the old-time war and victory dances.

The Comanches have always gotten a great deal of pleasure from social contacts. Today they tend to indulge in this type of pleasure at the expense of their work and obligations. Council meetings, ceremonies, and family consultations once brought the people together, but now decisions are made individually with white officials. The peyote ceremony was, in part, an attempt to satisfy the social urge.

At the close of a full life-span of time since they were compelled to give up their nomadic life, a few Comanches still sit and dream of past glories and of an untrammeled people who dwelt in an unmeasured wilderness. In retrospect they see once more the trooping warriors as they gallop toward the fray and hear their defiant whoops. They sit in the charmed circle of counsellors of the tribe. Of reservations and agents, of farms and towns, of railways and other innovations they grow forgetful. There will be some who will continue to dream until the end of life.

On the other hand, the Comanches as a group have long since ceased to roam, to strive for the old, or to dream.

21: Burnet T-5 (1818-1819) 1954 NO6 Comanche NO6
Texas

[ca. 1818]

exception, however, to the general resemblance.—The Yamparacks are more honest and punctilious in their dealings, and much less addicted to thievery. This may be accounted for, by the fewness of their opportunities of trade; the commercial intercourse between the Indians and whites, has invariably had a demoralizing influence on the untutored Savages.

The Yamparacks can probably furnish from 7 to 800 warriors. These frequently unite with the Comanchees, and participate largely in their depredations on the provincial Spaniards.

Of the Tenaways my information is less minute and authentic, they being seldom visited in their distinct villages, by Americans. But they sometimes descend by families, or small parties, to the Comanchee range, to solicit the charity of their brethren who are more contiguous to our settlements, and are constantly supplied with a profusion of such articles as their fancies or necessities require, and who are extremely liberal to their less favored and often destitute kindred. From the representations of the Comanchees and some of their own chiefs, I conclude their numerical strength does not vary much from that of the Yamparacks. This would place the entire aggregate force of the three tribes at about 3000 warriors, which I presume is a probable computation.

The Tenaways range through a mountainous district that separates the waters of the Rio del Norte, from the rivers of Texas, and they sometimes extend their perambulations to the head waters of the Red River of Natchitoches. They carry on a small traffic with the Spaniards of Santa Fee, from whom they receive blankets, knives and tobacco, in exchange for the mules and horses which they capture from the Spaniards of the adjacent Provinces. They often mingle with the Yamparacks when traversing the southern extreme of their range. The utmost harmony subsists between these several bands. They have no distinct limits assigned them, neither does one party claim, in relation to another, any exclusive sovereignty over the particular sec-

21: Burnet T-5 (1818-1819) 1951 NO6 Comanche 06
Texas

The Squaws are [ca. 1818] 175
literally "hewers of wood and drawers of water," to their 593
dominate and supercilious husbands. Every description of 562
domestic labour is imposed upon them to a degree not usual,
even among savages, and they seem to endure the burden
with an uncomplaining cheerfulness; or rather, with the
quiescence of a temper subdued by habit and ignorance, to
a condition the most onerous and humiliating. But commis- 175
seration is more sensibly awakened to their moral, than to 157
their physical state, for they exhibit a total departure from
every thing that is amiable or interesting in the sex. To
the most hideous degeneracy from feminine suavity and
agreeableness of person, they unite a more than commen-
surate debasement of mind and manners. The choice porce-
lain of nature has become as the coarsest potters clay; and
the bland adornments of female character, have given place
to a fierce and unmitigated barbarism. In truth the largest 175
portion of the nation's barbarity consists in the character of 157
their women. They are infinitely more cruel and ferocious 562
than the men, and are much more addicted to pilfering, in
which they have acquired a proficiency that almost defies
detection. They take a peculiar delight in torturing the 175
adult male prisoners, who, according to an ancient custom, 727
are surrendered to their fiend-like amusement for three days [152]
succeeding their arrival in the village. The quantum of
punishment that is inflicted, is however, in some degree
proportioned to the events of the campaign. If the war
party have suffered no damage, it is comparatively light
and trivial, amounting only to a few gentle flagellations,
by way of giving merriment to the dance, and cadence to
the song of triumph. But those who are captured on a dis-
astrous excursion, are punished with a most revolting bar-
barity, that often terminates in death. During the three
days of abandonment by the men, the prisoner is stretched
on the ground, each extremity pinioned to a stake, where
he lies motionless, save in the writhings of fear and anguish,
and exposed to the fury of the squaws, who alternately
recreate themselves by inflicting on their prostrate enemy
every variety of torture that a savage fancy can suggest.
At evening the passive victim is released, to undergo a more

21: Burnet T-5 (1818-1819) 1 1 NO6 Comanche .06
Texas

(ca. 1818)

the Indian character. The Comanches manifest their sensibilities by mourning vehemently for the dead. They continue their lamentations stately, morning and evening, for a length of time proportioned to the affinity and the consequence of the deceased. The women shave their heads and scarify themselves with knives or sharp flints, until they are literally covered with blood. Whether they have derived this practice from the discomfited prophets of Baal, (I Kings 18, 28) is for learned antiquarians to determine. The men set too much value on the velvet softness of their tawny skins, to have them scarred and serrated by so unprofitable a custom; but they will sometimes shave their heads, which is also considered a grievous retrenchment of masculine beauty. At each periodical lament, the bereaved relations assemble unitedly to bewail their departed friend. Tears are shed in copious profusion, accompanied by loud and plaintive strains of hideous dissonance, not unlike the howlings of ravening wolves. The goods and chattels of the deceased, including his tent and all its apparatus, are sometimes burnt; and such of his horses and mules as the avarice of the living will relinquish, are killed in order to be transferred to the hunting grounds of Elysium, for the future benefit and behoof of the dead. It was estimated by eye-witnesses, that during the prevalence of the small-pox among them in 1819, when they were swept off, as with the besom of destruction, there were not less than 5000 of these valuable animals immolated in this manner. The mode of conducting their funeral obsequies, I have never witnessed, and believe they sedulously avoid the observation of strangers of these occasions.

[Note. The length of this letter compels us to divide it. The rest will appear next week.]

[*The Cincinnati Literary Gazette*, June 12, 1824]

Letter IV.

[Concluded]

Vanity, certainly, is not peculiar to the Comanchees, but they possess more vanity both national and personal,

21: Burnet T-5 (1818-1819) 1951 NO6 Comanche no6
Texas

[ca. 1818]

than any other people whatever. Foppery in all its contemptible gradations, of dress, deportment and mental nothingness and insipidity is the prevailing characteristic of the young men. An Indian Dandy would, to be sure, be an amusing *unique* in the circles of fashion; but if you could transport a full dressed Comanchee buck into a coterie of our most exquisite "Delectables," my word for it, he would eclipse them in all the essential properties of that profession. The squaws from the infancy are too completely servile to bestow either time or solicitude on the ornaments of person. The men are large, and well proportioned and generally, good looking—the women, as much the reverse as human nature will bear. As a nation, they think themselves the most numerous and powerful on earth—and will listen with incredulous wonderment to a recital of facts that controul this flattering opinion.—So true is it that ignorance and vanity are inseparably allied.

The Comanchees do not cultivate the earth, but subsist for the most part on the erratic Buffaloes which descend into their district in the fall, in pursuit of a verdant herbage, and return in the spring, (such of them as survive the depredations of their numerous biped enemies) to their northern range. It has been remarked that the number of Buffaloes that annually reach the regions inhabited by the Comanchees, has sensibly diminished within a few years. In the event of a serious failure of that munificent provision of nature, these and other tribes of similar habits, will be compelled to resort to agriculture, or to recede northwardly in pursuit of their ancient prey. The former of these alternatives would be difficult of adoption, on account of their native inertness and aversion to labor; and the latter would probably be rendered impracticable by the jealousy of other tribes, who already occupy the northern wilds.

These wandering savages have made but small advances in the domestic arts. Their lodges or tents, are formed of Buffaloe hides dressed to a suitable consistency, and erected on poles, in the shape of an elongated cone, having an aperture at the top to emit the smoke, which purpose it answers but very imperfectly. They are exces-

23: Cabello y Robles G-3 (1778-1786) 1961
NO6 Comanche NO6
Eastern Comanche

[ca. 1786]

aforesaid chiefs has been by election and vote of all the Eastern Nation; [the two chiefs] having [already] made themselves very distinguished in the encounters of war with their enemies, by which they gained the esteem of all their Nation and the following which they have; in the councils that they hold, always their vote decides, and the rest of the Nation does not oppose them.

EIGHTH: What Is the Personal Character of These Chiefs and the Influence That They Have, and Are Able to Have in the Negotiations of the Nation?

As the two great captains previously mentioned have not come to this presidio of San Antonio de Béxar, the governor has not been able to learn their character, but if the experiences of the six lesser captains that have come to the ratification of the peace treaties [are a basis for judging], they are of a generous spirit and have manifested more friendliness to the Spaniards than the captains of the other friendly Nations of the North. It has been observed that the retinue of the chiefs [of the Nations of the North] look at the [Comanche] chiefs with more respect and give them more subordination than they do their own chiefs.

With respect to the rest of the observations that the governor has made of this nation, he has come to understand that it is necessary to treat them with much friendliness and consistency, for they are, in short, of a very sensitive nature and do not accommodate themselves to any harshness. Without compromising the dignity of his office, it is indispensible [that the governor] manifest toward them all love, and make them believe in the governor, for them to behave satisfactorily toward [the Spaniards]; for if they begin to lack confidence, they take many precautions and manifest their vexation; in virtue of which it is necessary that a governor of the Province of Texas, whom they call Father, have the gravest finesse and precautions in dealing with the said Indians, in order to keep them always

24: Richardson H-4 (no date) 1929 NO6 Comanche NO6
(1854-1859) Texas

177 241 657 [231] do them but for the fact that the fear of the white frontiersmen and wild Indians forced them to keep up their horses and feed them much of the time.[22] This partial elimination of the communist system had a wholesome effect, but it would have been impossible to carry it much farther because of the scarcity of arable land. A division of land so that each family head would have had a parcel separate and apart from the others would have become utterly impossible after a generation or two. Thus the cramped conditions on the small reservation would have acted as a barrier to progress even if the Indians had been permitted to remain there.

177 Many of the citizens of Texas complained that the reservation Indians were treacherous and dangerous and yet some of those persons living near the reserve vouched for the honesty of the Indians and stated that they regarded them as friends rather than enemies.[23] The settlement and development of the country in the vicinity of the reservation indicates that the white people generally had confidence in the peaceful disposition of the savages. It is significance that the most serious complaints did not come from those persons living near the reservation but from settlements a hundred or more miles away.

657 871 Some of the children made good progress in school. In 1858, it was reported that ten boys were in school and in a later account they were reported to be learning remarkably fast. Thomas T. 157 Hawkins, special agent, who was sent to investigate the reservation in 1858, wrote of the Comanches:

> I regard them as superior in natural sense and intelligence to any of our full blooded native tribes—and I have seen many specimens in Washington, in the west and upon my journey hither.[24]

626 623 [648] At times the Indians manifested some disposition to exercise tribal government sufficient to restrain unruly members. Once when a certain Indian, named Jack Porter, and two or three fol-

[113] 22. Neighbor's report. September 16, 1857. Thirty-fifth Congress, First Session, Sen. Exec. Doc. No. 11, Vol. II. Also, Neighbors to Manypenny, May 14, 1854, and H. P. Jones, reservation farmer to M. Leeper, October 29, 1858, University of Texas photostat copies.

[113] 23. Thomas Lambshead (a citizen) to Manypenny, May 1, 1855. Ms. University of Texas photostat copy. Also, Hawkins to Mix, October 30, 1858, Ibid.

[113] 24. Hawkins to Mix, October 30, 1858. Ms. University of Texas photostat copy.

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The tabus which are attached to supernatural power are a major reason that a doctor may experience difficulty in his attempt to find a successor. Wallace and Hoebel (1952:165) mention this in their discussion of Comanche supernaturalism:

> Such reluctance to assume power, or particular powers, was common among the Comanches. Powers were always accompanied by tabus; tabus were onerous restrictions on the freedom of action that a Comanche male cherished. The result was an ambivalent attitude toward the possession of Medicine.

Sanapia, being aware of this, is planning to delete certain tabus from her Medicine way in order to make the acquisition of her powers more palatable to a twentieth-century Comanche. Of course, the absence of certain tabus also indicates the absence of the concomitant degree of power. Her successor will not be burdened with the food and eating tabus which Sanapia finds so cumbersome. He will also not have to be bothered with the tabu forbidding the making of direct requests. These deletions are major concessions for Sanapia, but ones which she feels are necessary if her tradition is to continue.

Sanapia's mother modified her Medicine way before transmitting it to Sanapia for much the same reasons that Sanapia is now being compelled to consider. An element which occurred in her mother's modifications, though not in Sanapia's, was the deletion of certain powers because of their lack of contemporary function. Her mother possessed many medicines and songs which were associated with the role of midwife. She told Sanapia that the delivering of infants would be taken over by white doctors in the future and, therefore, there was no reason for Sanapia to learn the skill or to be compelled to observe the tabus associated with it. To both Sanapia and her mother the primary function of an eagle doctor is his ability to cure ghost sickness[2]. The deletions in tabus and power made by Sanapia and her mother have not infringed on this specific power.

Sanapia believes that her doctoring tradition will ultimately die as the Comanches become more acculturated. She states that *puhakuts* will cease to exist when the Comanches have no more need for them. Sanapia's sensitivity, concern with function, and general pragmatic instincts make her a very sensitive barometer of the manner in which culture change is viewed and handled by a traditionally oriented Comanche. Since her opinion of herself is bound by supernatural sanctions, and not merely by elusive value structure, her reaction to culture change is much more dramatic.

Attitudes about Sanapia

The ways in which Comanches of both northern and southern affiliation and members of neighboring tribes react to Sanapia as a personality are many and

[2] "Ghost sickness," "twisted face," and "crooked mouth" are names which the Comanches, as well as other southern Plains tribes, give to a condition of facial hemiplegia, usually with concomitantly occurring constrictions of the hands and arms, which is said to result from ghost contact.

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115 varied. Because of her supernatural powers and mercurial temperament, a certain
159 aloofness marks her relationship even with her friends. Only two old women,
157 women who grew up with Sanapia, seem to be able to overcome this barrier.
571 This aloofness is as much instigated by Sanapia as it is a reaction of others based on fear, or at least uneasiness in her presence.

Some Comanches exhibit a type of reaction to Sanapia which is interpreted by other Comanches as jealousy. Sanapia has a position and a skill which is denied to the majority of Comanches. Many of the younger and more acculturated though sympathetic Comanches consider her a likeable but eccentric old woman. She is considered ridiculous by many of the southern Comanches. Many Comanches, as well as neighboring Kiowas and Apaches, continue to represent her as sexually promiscuous, alcoholic, violent, and prone to excessive gambling. However, in all these cases her traditionalism and conservative Comanche beliefs are acknowledged, though they may be interpreted positively or negatively, depending on who is presenting the opinion.

A Kiowa woman offered the following opinion:

> She sure is a good old woman . . . pretty for an old woman too. I seen you with her bunch a lot so I guess you know what she is . . . what she does. I took my niece up to her once and she cared for her and got her well in a few days. I tell other people about how she took care of my little girl and they might go to see her if they get sick bad or if their family might get sick.

Another informant was less charitable in his evaluation:

> I don't know much about it. I've heard some of my people talking about an old woman who lives south from here. They say she can curse you if she wants to and make you sick. It's that woman you mention too. She supposed to be a bad one, but I never seen her. I don't believe that suff about curses myself but a lot of people . . . Indian people . . . do. You better watch out. They say she can do it.

Sanapia's Self-Concept

115 Sanapia is aware that some people laugh at her, and she does as much
159 as she can to eliminate this possibility, for she is an exceedingly proud woman.
156 Types of behavior which ostentatiously identify her as a *puhakut*, such as wearing a black kerchief or vocally demanding that others observe her tabu restrictions, are avoided by her for fear that others will think that she is "just a crazy old Indian."

Sanapia's opinion of herself remains quite high in spite of the pressures
115 that surround her. In the following account she describes how she brought a dead
159 niece back to life:
156
756 I was doctoring my niece one time . . . the doctor gave up on her. She had
755 cancer and liver. So the doctor, white doctor, gave up. They dismissed her from the Indian hospital and she went home. Somebody came to our house that after-

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fabric would not be torn in the process. Because of the excessive rigors of the environment, emphasis was necessarily placed on cooperation and supportiveness among group members. Perhaps Basin culture ghost-fear beliefs acted as a means by which aggressive antisocial tendencies, stimulated in this potentially tension-ridden society, could be projected, displaced, or transferred outside the group, much as the Plains cultures could direct intragroup motivated anxiety outside the group and toward their enemies through the war complex. The Basin people, lacking warfare patterns and not being able to afford excessive intragroup aggressions or asocial behavior, were able to project their fears, anxieties, tensions, and so forth toward ghosts. This specific type of displacement target is especially effective since it exists outside the realm of living men. Ghosts inhabit another world or plane of existence. Ghosts, besides being something to hate, fear, and aggress against, can also serve to explain misfortune, illness, and those occurrences in life which possess no natural explanations. However, that the ghosts functioned mainly in Basin culture as a means of displacing intrasocially motivated aggressive impulses is strongly suggested by the effectiveness of the Comanche war complex in decreasing ghost fear. Other factors which were doubtless of significance in leading to a decrease in ghost fear among the nomadic Comanches were the highly mobile nature of Comanche society, the more favorable environment of the Plains, the ability to increase geographic distance between group members and bands, and the subsequent ability of the Comanche individual to acquire a greater degree of independence from his primary group.

The Resurgence of the Ghost Complex

The life style of the nomadic culture, as opposed to the Basin prototype, tended to place heavy emphasis on individual assertiveness, independence, aggressiveness, and physical prowess. These gross aspects of traditional Comanche personality are relevant in understanding the severity of personal and social-cultural tensions which occurred when, in the reservation and postreservation period, the Comanche individual was to a great extent denied the prerogative of expressing himself in the traditional Comanche manner. Simply stated, the dynamic, mobile, and assertive Comanche personality was suddenly penned and confined because it came in conflict with the dominant white society's concept of proper and acceptable personal expression. Traditional Comanche modes of personal expression were not only deemed of negative value by the white society but they were subject to punishment as well. Therefore, certain Comanche personality traits, perfectly acceptable and functional in a culture where aggression, for example, could be released at a distance from the group and with the group approval, were suddenly loosed within the group because of its sudden forced confinement. Add to this the emotionally defined cleavage in Comanche society based on differential acceptance rates of acculturation stimuli between bands, and the presence of a high degree of psychological and sociocultural anxiety and tension in contemporary Comanche society is understandable. The notion of ghosts and their ability to interfere in human affairs has found new vitality among twentieth-century Comanches as they

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157 177 178 775 177 178 775 571 attempt to discover alternative methods of expressing and relieving the potentially dysfunctional emotional states which now plague them.

A further suggestion that the ghost complex among the contemporary Comanches function to relieve intrasocial tensions which have appeared as a result of the myriad influences of the acculturation situation is found in the most recent ethnographic studies of the Comanche, which were obtained by the Santa Fe group in 1933. In all the materials published as a result of this group's work, the Comanches are not mentioned as possessing a great degree of ghost fear. This feature is very obviously present today, however. Since the Comanche "capture" occurred in the late nineteenth century, it can be assumed that a relatively large proportion of the Comanche population living in 1933, at the time of the Santa Fe group's investigation, would be composed of individuals who had actually taken part in the nomandic Comanche culture. The influence of this select group on the Comanche society of the 1930s was no doubt great. Their presence probably served to prolong the existence of traditional values and world view in vital form well into the postreservation-period Comanche generation; this would include the relative absence of ghost fear. At present, however, the majority of Comanches are two to four generations removed from the time of the nomadic Comanche culture, and it is among these people that the ghost complex has found new life and meaning. If the material collected by the 1933 group is indeed correct, it would appear that Comanche's attitudes toward ghosts have developed to their present form only since the 1930s. Sanapia has volunteered the information that the incidences of ghost sickness among the Comanche have been increasing over the last thirty years.

Some of the specific social forces which have been active in Comanche society within this time span and which have no doubt contributed to the resurgence in ghost belief have already been suggested. Conflict between the values of the white and Comanche society, increased intrasocial tensions in Comanche society, and lack of a satisfactory means to displace aggressive socially disruptive forces away from the society must be counted as three major forces [186] toward disequilibrium in Comanche society. To this list can be added racial discrimination and prejudice on the part of white society and to a certain extent on the part of Comanches. Associated with these aspects are the increasing pressures toward assimilation of the Comanche society being exercised by white society. However, while the Comanches are being persuaded that the rewards of the white life style are more desirable than those of Comanche culture, they are in most cases denied the avenues to achieve these rewards. Through all of this, the gap between core traditional Comanche values and the extinct culture upon which these values are based continue to expand, leaving many Comanches in a limbo of apathy, ambivalence, and neurotic marginality.

775 154 571 The contemporary Comanche's belief in ghosts serves to relieve disruptive intrasocial tensions by presenting the members of this society with a means of directing frustrations, hostility, and other emotions of a potentially dysfunctional nature, both to the individual and the group, toward a target outside the culture's boundaries. It is also significant that ghosts are outside the boundaries of white

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159 scribed modes of behavior and thought can ebb and flow with the stimuli of
756 acculturation. He can bend, withdraw, aggress, and withdraw again, while retain-
177 ing a homogeneous and integrated self-concept. Sanapia, however, is relatively
554 rigid and must react immediately lest her role structure be shattered.

Sanapia Prevails

159 To Sanapia, she is an eagle doctor first and foremost. Her whole life is
756 bound in this role; therefore, its protection is extremely dear to her. Sanapia
177 lives with compromise, rationalization, and intellectualization. Because of her
[157] functionalistic and pragmatic temperament, she must defend an institution which to her at times has little meaning in its particulars. Each new realization of acculturative changes stimulates her to attempt to fit this newly acquired realization into a nonantagonistic relationship to her role as Medicine woman. She knows that she must meet the threats of culture change directly if her institution is to continue to have meaning for Comanches who are reacting to acculturation.

In this manner she has incorporated elements and sentiments of Christianity and organized peyotism into her own religious structure in an attempt at compatibility with the religious atmosphere of her life situation. By accepting the basic tenets of Christianity and organized peyotism, she has also provided herself with further sources of supernatural powers. Sanapia has defined illness into "white" and "Indian" categories, thereby retaining her position in the overall medical structure of both cultures. She has borrowed words and concepts from the mass media to elaborate her views of certain aspects of physiology, health, and medicine. These are but a few examples. Sanapia, while anchoring her sentiments and loyalties in a traditional Comanche setting, has extended herself, through her concern with her profession, into the white culture.

Perhaps the most significant points this study has illustrated are the psychotherapeutic function which Sanapia possesses in contemporary Comanche
775 culture and the psychological function of ghost sickness. Although it cannot be
753 absolutely substantiated, it would appear that ghost sickness, in its present form,
177 is a new arrival in Comanche society. Ghost sickness can be considered, in most cases, a conversion reaction whose negative emotional basis is founded in the cultural and personal confusion and tension produced by the increasingly efficient success of acculturation in corroding the traditional basis of Comanche
159 society. It then appears that Sanapia is the curer of a dynamic and functional
756 human disorder. She is not a specialist in the treatment of broken bones or gun-
177 shot wounds like a buffalo doctor, nor of rattlesnake bites, like a snake doctor; she is the curer of an illness which is psychodynamic in nature. As her people change, ghost sickness will no doubt change, and Sanapia and successive eagle doctors' interpretation of ghost sickness will also change. Sanapia treats the individual rather than a specific static human affliction; she is essentially a native psychiatrist. This dynamic flexibility has enable Comanche eagle doctors to exist long after the other varieties of Comanche native dotcors have had their function usurped by white doctors during the ongoing process of acculturation.

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These young Indians had
spent less time on horseback and more time inside, out of the weather; nor had they ever ridden the war trails. The women of this group took better care of their hair. The older women's hair generally had an untidy look.

This sullen aloofness and aimless drifting didn't affect the younger children—it seemed to set in when a boy got to be fifteen or sixteen years old. The younger children, when they arrived home on vacation, were bursting with energy. They rode their ponies helter-skelter over the prairies and rivaled the channel cat in Cache Creek with their cavorting, swimming, and diving.

They came to town with their parents—the girls riding in a hack or the little lumber wagon with the women. If it was the wagon, the bows and canvas cover converted it into a little prairie schooner. On a nice day the canvas would be rolled up a ways on either side, to let the air through.

Comanche men and boys never rode in the wagon or hack with the women. The boys would be riding along with their father, horseback. If there were not enough stock saddles to go around, the younger boys would be riding ancient Mexican-type saddles. These Mexican saddles had a flat look, compared to the up-to-date stock saddle. Neither the fork nor the cantle was as high, while the seat was broader. Its most distinguishing feature was the top of the fork. Thin, broad, and round, it made one think of a pancake. I am sure the tops of some of the horns were as much as four inches across.

Somehow, the youngsters always had a few nickels to spend for candy, cakes, and wax—their name for all kinds of chewing gum. The happy parents stood around and glowed in their pride. Sometimes the parents had one of the youngsters show off—they would have one of the boys interpret as they bought their groceries or other store items. They wanted everyone in the store to see how much their children had learned.

But all this youthful, happy exuberance suddenly vanished in the late teens. Few of the girls stayed in school as long as the boys, and the girls never got the good from their Carlisle clothes. About the second or third time they came to the store after their last year in school, they would buy some gay-colored, patterned calico along with matching cotton braid. The next time you saw them, they would be wearing a *pit-si-qui-na.*

The young men did wear out their white man's clothes, but seem-

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in Charley's home, though his son To-pet-chy's home was only a short distance away, on the east side of West Cache Creek. And though a Jesus Man (Christian), he belonged to a native Baptist church.

I am sure I felt a bit of intellectual awe in the presence of Charley Ross, and this was renewed at our meetings over the years. Here was a man, it must be remembered, who was born into a stone-age culture that was without knowledge of the smelting of iron or any other metal, and without the skill to forge tools from metal already smelted. From the viewpoint of the white people of that time, the Comanches were murderers, rapists, home-burners, kidnappers of women and children, horse thieves, cattle thieves, and all-round savages. History justifies this opinion, but there is this saving grace for the Comanche: he was here first. The white man was the invader. The empire of Comanchería had been forged and was in existence more than eighty-five years before George Washington became president of the United States. From the ruins of this empire came Charley Ross, who first found a way to enter the white man's world and then set about softening the impact between the two races that events decreed should live side by side. Mrs. Cato wrote in a letter to me, "My father was a very intelligent man, above the average, and so very much interested in higher education for his race of people and his own children. Even though he himself did not receive full benefit of complete education, he had the mind of a college graduate."

What a man accomplishes during his lifetime does not complete his true measurement. One must also judge how well he has projected himself into the next generation by adding the accomplishments of his children. Charley Ross's son-in-law, Mr. Cato, has told me that at the end of the 1965-66 school year Charley's children and grandchildren had completed forty-seven years of teaching. Others, not teachers, hold responsible positions with railroads, oil companies, and hospitals.

I have emphasized Charley Ross's pleasant manners and ready smile. But there was no servility about him, nor did he ever attempt to please everyone at the cost of any sacrifice of principle. He was a positive character about whom I never heard a derogatory word, either from whites, many of whom were always looking for a flaw or chink in his armor of friendliness, or from his tribesmen, who tended to distrust any Indian who earned the friendship of white people. He went about his self-appointed task of being a catalyst for the two races with good will and common sense.

32: Gilles O,X-3 (1902-c.1910) 1974
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must stay completely apart from the Comanche women and girls." He explained it this way. Comanche women are supposed to have no communications, other than the most necessary, with menfolks other than their own, and this applied with extra force to white men. Comanche men held their women to strict account as to their conduct, and a white man could cause a Comanche woman serious trouble, unawares, should he try to be friendly. I lived up to this rule in every respect. Then, in addition, I naturally extended to all Indian women and girls every courtesy I had been taught to extend to women of my own race. This, too, could have had some bearing.

I could not help but notice Mo-cho-rook. He was a standout in every way. To start with, he was obviously the oldest of the old Indians. He was noticeably smaller than any of the other Indian men. And what was even more obvious, he had at this time only one wife. And of all the old fellows, he had by far the youngest wife and the youngest child. He was completely antisocial. I not only never gleaned a smile, but I never even drew a grunt from him, in the five plus years that I knew him.

On the top of all this, he had about the meanest look, and the cruelest eyes, I have ever seen on a human. I was later to know Geronimo, who was being held as a prisoner of war at Fort Sill. If anyone could have run Mo-cho-rook even a close second for looking mean and cruel, it would have been Geronimo.

The only time he ever came inside the store was when he needed smoking tobacco. He would have his nickel ready in his hand, would point to the Bull Durham, and when I handed him the tobacco, he would hand me the nickel. My fattest smile never brought a change in his expression. Once he had his tobacco, he would return outside. I never knew him to stay in out of even the most inclement weather.

I soon sorted out his wife. She was a young, large-limbed girl, with the true Comanche copper color. She had a baby boy, around a year old. He was old enough to be out of the cradle board, but that first summer he was not walking as yet. He was a healthy-looking little chap and, like all Indian babies, well behaved. I was later to learn that this child was the only one ever born to Mo-cho-rook by any of the numerous wives he had had. His squaw nearly always stayed in our store until they were ready to go home, and she bought all their supplies. He was one of the few Indians who never found it necessary to run an account until Grass Money time.

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WHISKEY NIGHTS

439 ONLY BY A CONSIDERABLE SEARCH could anyone be found in all southwest Oklahoma Territory lower down on the social scale than the man who peddled whiskey to the Comanches. There were reasons for his low rating, even aside from the fact that the peddler was a breaker of both the United States law and the law of the territory of Oklahoma.

177 [181] [273] At the turn of the century, the Comanche warrior was only twenty-six years from his war trails. Many considered him a savage with only a superficial veneer of civilization; dangerous when sober, he was doubly feared when drinking.

[157] 273 Nor was it considered sporting to tempt him, as the average old Comanche's resistance was nil. The most cogent argument against selling the Comanche liquor was financial. A dollar spent by the average Comanche family man for liquor meant his family was denied its value in necessities.

[435] 262 435 511 The going price of a pint of cheap whiskey from the Comanche bootlegger was five dollars. This amount would supply a family of five with ample food for a week: a twenty-four-pound sack of flour, four pounds of dry salt bacon, two pounds of good coffee, eight pounds of sugar, ten pounds of good boiling beef (the Comanche seldom fried beef), seventy-five cents for dry onions and assorted

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157 Ca-vo-yo, who was one of the first of the old chaps to become an individual to me, was such a friendly, kindly old fellow that it was hard for me to picture him riding into battle, screaming his war cry. But by the agency's record he must have been a successful and respected warrior for approximately twenty years. Had he not been a [553] [555] successful warrior, none would have sought him out to name their man-child and give of his medicine.

778 [114] I have tried a number of times to write Ca-vo-yo's story as a giver of names, but the trouble always is that scarcely have you begun to write about the giving of a name, when you run into *Pa-haw-cut*, the Comanche name for medicine. And it is hard to tell a white audience about Comanche medicine, because the white man has nothing through which he can identify with the Comanche's feeling about it. I thought at one time of creating a straw man by combining an individual who by faith had a guardian angel with one who believed his destiny was directed by the stars and their positions, and then to this composite individual adding one who believed in luck—one who would not leave his home for the office of a morning without his good luck charm. Then I decided that the faith of even such an individual would still fall far short of a Comanche's faith in his medicine.

[555] When a Comanche warrior was bragging, to an audience gathered around a campfire, of some mighty coup he had brought about, he was not bragging of a personal exploit—he was telling about the 701 strength of his medicine. From the earliest war games he played as a boy, throughout his active adult life, he was constantly training himself to be ever a better warrior. It was his way of life. Also, he sought to perfect himself in the making of arms, both for war and for the hunt. Each warrior furnished his own arms. We have a written history, more or less, for the last 175 years of Comanche warfare, which shows that the Comanche possessed neither an armory nor a commissary.

492 411 224 Just as he had one set of arrows for war and another set of arrows he used in the killing of the buffalo, so the Comanche had horses trained for war and horses trained to carry him alongside the buffalo, 778 so he could loose an arrow into the rib cage of his huge quarry. But 726 it was his individual *Pa-haw-cut*, or medicine, that allowed him to 492 count coup early and often in the battle—that caused his horse to carry him at full speed into battle and to carry him away in a stra- 778 tegic retreat. The same medicine allowed his horse to place him beside 492 224